



The Surgeon General of the
Public Health Service
Rockville MD 20857

OCT 16 1990

Arnold Wendroff, Ph.D.
298 Marlborough Road
Brooklyn, NY 11226

Dear Dr. Wendroff:


We received your letter in which you expressed concern about the risk of domestic mercury vapor exposure. The ritual of sprinkling mercury on the floor to ward off "evil spirits" is practiced by selected minority groups and may pose potential hazards to those who encounter the mercury.

The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) within the Public Health Service is the Agency that specifically is charged with preventing or mitigating the adverse human health effects and diminished quality of life that result from exposure to hazardous substances in the environment and I understand that you have already contacted them. Dr. Cynthia Harris, Ph.D., Chief of the Community Health Branch, Division of Health Assessment and Consultation, ATSDR, is following up on this matter and should be back in touch with you in the near future.

Also, for the past 10 months, Dr. Ruth Etzel, M.D., Ph.D., has been conducting research in the area of mercury exposure. Dr. Etzel is employed at the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), Center for Environmental Health and Injury Control, Division of Environmental Hazards. The CDC is also an Agency within the Public Health Service. We are currently awaiting results from that research. I am confident that these two Agencies will remain vigilant in the pursuit of this potential health threat.

I appreciate your interest and encourage you to continue your efforts to help protect the public's health. Please feel free to contact the above-mentioned resource persons if you have further questions.

Sincerely,



Antonia C. Novello, M.D., M.P.H.
Surgeon General